AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A method for the preparation of a polymer electrolyte electrochemical cell using an electrolyte precursor, said precursor comprising one or more solvents, one or more salts and a polymer which dissolves in the solvent at a first temperature, T_{dissol}, and which is capable of forming a gel on subsequent cooling following heating to a second temperature, T_{gel}, wherein T_{dissol} is lower than T_{gel}, which method comprises:

heating the electrolyte precursor to T_{dissol};

(a) optionally cooling the electrolyte precursor;

(b) incorporating the electrolyte precursor into the electrochemical cell;

(c) heating the electrochemical cell to T_{gel}; and

(d) cooling the polymer electrochemical cell to ambient temperature

to bring about gelling of the polymer electrolyte.

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which said polymer is a homopolymer or copolymer selected from the group of monomers consisting of vinyl fluoride, vinylidenefluoride, trifluoroethylene, tetrafluoroethylene and hexafluoropropylene.

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which said polymer is a copolymer of vinylidenefluoride and hexafluoropropylene.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3, in which said copolymer of vinylidenefluoride and hexafluoropropylene has a molecular weight in the range

50,000-500,000, and a weight ratio of vinylidenefluoride and hexafluoropropylene in the range 80:20 to 90:10.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the electrolyte comprises one or more solvent(s) selected from the group consisting of:

(a) alicyclic carbonates represented by the following general formula:

$$-C(=O)=O-CR_1R_2-[CR_3R_4]_m-CR_5R_6-O-,$$

wherein each of R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4, R_5 and R_6 independently represents hydrogen or a C_1-C_4 alkyl group and m is 0 or 1;

(b) aliphatic carbonates represented by the general formula $R_7[OC(O)]_pOR_8$, wherein each of R_7 and R_8 independently represents a C_1-C_4 alkyl group, and p is an integer equal to 1 or 2;

(c) lactones in the form of cyclic esters represented by the general formula:

$$-C(=O)-CR_9R_{10}-CR_{11}R_{12}-[CR_{15}R_{16}]_r-CR_{13}R_{14}-O-$$

wherein each of R_9, R_{10}, R_{11}, R_{12}, R_{13}, R_{14}, R_{15} and R_{16} independently represents hydrogen or a C_{1-2} alkyl group and r is 0 or 1;

(d) esters represented by the formula $R_{17}[C(O)]OR_{18}]_t$, wherein each of R_{17}, R_{18} and R_{19} independently represents hydrogen or a C_1-C_2 alkyl group, and t is 0 or an integer equal to 1 or 2; and

(e) glymes represented by the general formula $R_{20}O(R_{21}O)_nR_{22}$, in which each of R_{20} and R_{22} independently represents a C_{1-2} alkyl group, R_{21} is $-(CR_{23}R_{24}CR_{25}R_{26})-$ wherein each of

R_{23}, R_{24}, R_{25} and R_{26} independently represents hydrogen or a C_1-C_4 alkyl groups, and n is an integer from 2 to 6.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the electrolyte comprises one or more salts selected from the group consisting of alkali metal or ammonium salts of ClO_4, CF_3SO_3, AsF_6, PF_6 and BF_4.

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the electrolyte comprises solvent(s), salt(s) and polymer in the compositional range from 63:25:12 to 94:5:1 percent of the total weight of the electrolyte system.

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 in which the electrolyte is confined in a separator consisting of a porous structure made of a polymer.

9. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 8, in which the separator has a woven or non-woven structure having a pore size in the range of 10 x 10 nm to 1 x 1 mm.

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 8, in which the separator has a thickness of 10-100μm.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the electrochemical cell has a negative electrode structure comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of graphite, coke, mesocarbon microbeads, carbon black, aluminum,

silicon and tin, and a positive electrode structure comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of lithium manganese oxides, lithium cobalt oxides and lithium nickel oxides.

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the dissolution temperature T_{dissol} is in the range 45-80°C and the gelling temperature T_{gel} is in the range 75-100°C, with the proviso that T_{gel} should be higher than T_{dissol}.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the electrochemical cell is wound prior to electrolyte impregnation.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the electrolyte incorporation is carried out by pouring or injection.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, in which the electrodes display such a porosity which is such as to allow diffusion of a relatively solvent-rich electrolyte phase into the pores of the electrodes, leaving a relatively polymer-rich electrolyte phase in the volume between the electrodes.

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the gap between electrode laminates of the electrochemical cell is smaller than at least the largest polymer particles so that the electrolyte in the vicinity of the edge of the laminate and outside the laminate contains a larger amount of polymer than the electrolyte between the electrodes.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 4, wherein the copolymer of vinylidenefluoride and hexafluoropropylene has a molecular weight in the range of 100,000-300,000.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 5, wherein the electrolyte comprises one or more solvents selected from the group consisting of

(a) alicylic carbonates selected from the group consisting of ethylene carbonate and propylene carbonate;

(b) aliphatic carbonates selected from the group consisting of dimethyl carbonate and diethyl carbonate;

(c) lactones selected from the group consisting of γ-valerolactone and γ-butyrolactone;

(d) esters selected from the group consisting of (2-methoxyethylacetate) and ethylacetate; and

(e) glymes wherein R_{20} and R_{22} are methyl and R_{23}, R_{24}, R_{25} and R_{26} are hydrogen.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the electrolyte comprises solvent(s), salt(s) and polymer in the compositional range 75:17:8 to 88:8:4 percent of the total weight of the electrolyte system.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 8, wherein the separator consists of a porous structure made of a polymer selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, polycarbonate, and cellulose.

22. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10, wherein the thickness is 10-25 μm.

23. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein

the negative electrode structure comprises one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of graphite and mesocarbon microbeads; and

the positive electrode structure comprises $LiMn_2O_4$ of spinel structure.

24. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein T_{dissol} is in the range 65-75°C, and T_{gel} is in the range of 80-90°C.

25. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 6, wherein the electrolyte comprises one or more salts selected from the group consisting of $LiPF_6$ and $LiBF_4$.

26. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~ An electrochemical cell ~~according to claim 17,~~ having (i) a negative electrode structure comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of graphite, coke and mesocarbon microbeads, ~~wherein the~~ (ii) a positive electrode structure comprising ~~comprises~~ lithium ~~magnesium~~ manganese oxide, and (iii) a gelled polymer electrolyte, 1-12% by weight of the total weight of the electrolyte being said polymer, wherein said polymer is a homopolymer or copolymer selected from the group of monomers consisting of vinyl fluoride, vinylidenefluoride, trifluoroethylene, tetrafluoroethylene and hexafluoropropylene, said electrochemical cell being obtained by or being obtainable by a method comprising:

(a) heating an electrolyte precursor, comprising one or more solvents, one or more salts and a polymer which dissolves in the solvent at a first temperature, T_{dissol}, and which is

capable of forming a gel on subsequent cooling following heating to a second temperature, T_{gel}, to the temperature T_{dissol}, wherein T_{dissol} is lower than T_{gel};

(b) cooling the electrolyte precursor

(c) incorporating the electrolyte precursor into the electrochemical cell;

(d) heating the cell to T_{gel}; and

(e) cooling the polymer electrochemical cell to ambient temperature to bring about gelling of the polymer electrolyte.

27. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~ An electrochemical cell ~~according to claim 17,~~ having (i) a negative electrode structure comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of graphite, coke, and mesocarbon microbeads, (ii) a positive electrode structure comprising one or more compounds selected form the group consisting of lithium manganese oxides, lithium cobalt oxides, and lithium nickel oxides, and (iii) a gelled polymer electrolyte, 1-12% by weight of the total weight of the electrolyte being said polymer, wherein ~~the~~ said polymer is a copolymer of vinylidenefluoride and hexafluoropropylene, said electrochemical cell being obtained by or being obtainable by a method comprising:

(a) heating an electrolyte precursor, comprising one or more solvents, one or more salts and a polymer which dissolves in the solvent at a first temperature, T_{dissol}, and which is capable of forming a gel on subsequent cooling following heating to a second temperature, T_{gel}, to the temperature T_{dissol}, wherein T_{dissol} is lower than T_{gel};

(b) cooling the electrolyte precursor

(c) incorporating the electrolyte precursor into the electrochemical cell;

(d) heating the cell to T_{gel}; and

(e) cooling the polymer electrochemical cell to ambient temperature to bring about gelling of the polymer electrolyte.

28. ~~The~~ An electrochemical cell ~~according to claim 17,~~ having (i) a negative electrode structure comprising one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of graphite, coke, and mesocarbon microbeads, (ii) a positive electrode structure comprising one or more compounds selected form the group consisting of lithium manganese oxides, lithium cobalt oxides, and lithium nickel oxides, and (iii) a gelled polymer electrolyte, ~~wherein the polymer is~~ 4-8% by weight of the total weight of the electrolyte[[.]] being said polymer, wherein said polymer is a homopolymer or copolymer selected from the group of monomers consisting of vinyl fluoride, vinylidenefluoride, trifluoroethylene, tetrafluoroethylene and hexafluoropropylene, said electrochemical cell being obtained by or being obtainable by a method comprising:

(a) heating an electrolyte precursor, comprising one or more solvents, one or more salts and a polymer which dissolves in the solvent at a first temperature, T_{dissol}, and which is capable of forming a gel on subsequent cooling following heating to a second temperature, T_{gel}, to the temperature T_{dissol}, wherein T_{dissol} is lower than T_{gel};

(b) cooling the electrolyte precursor

(c) incorporating the electrolyte precursor into the electrochemical cell;

(d) heating the cell to T_{gel}; and

(e) cooling the polymer electrochemical cell to ambient temperature to bring about gelling of the polymer electrolyte.